

ity that is supportive of what is clearly laid down in Scripture.

So here is the future for the next ten years. What will we do with the relationship between Ellen White and the Bible? What will we do with the primacy of justification? Will we give it primacy even in our evangelistic work? Will we cease from our sin of counting

heads as David did, which brought the wrath of God upon him? Statistics have a place but when statistics are used as the motivation for soul-winning work, instead of the cross of Christ, God may treat us as He treated David. So it seems to me that the next decade revolves around our attitude to the cross, the scripture, and to Ellen White.

## Ford Dismissal: Reactions and Response

### An Open Letter to President Wilson

*This letter was forwarded to Elder Wilson with 39 signatures. It was formulated during the summer break at Andrews University when the greater part of the student body was on vacation. It therefore represents only a portion of the interested parties. The letter was prepared in consultation with Seminary faculty.*

September 10, 1980

**D**ear Elder Wilson: We are pastors and scholars at Andrews Theological Seminary who are deeply concerned for the unity of the church. As Seventh-day Adventists committed to the church and its pursuit of truth, we wish to express our appreciation to you for convening the Glacier View Conference. We have not envied you your difficult task. Nevertheless, because of our love for this church we deplore the rending asunder of Christ's body by what we consider to be the unjust recommendation that Dr. Desmond Ford not be employed in denominational service. This was improper for these reasons:

1) The two consensus statements unanimously voted at Glacier View by his peers were accepted by Dr. Ford. He was therefore in harmony with his brethren.

2) These consensus documents actually af-

firm Dr. Ford's major biblical concerns. For instance they concede:

- 1) The book of Hebrews pictures Christ going "within the veil," i.e., into the Most Holy Place (not the holy place) at His ascension to be our intercessor. The book of Hebrews does not teach a two-apartment or two-phase ministry.
- b) The defilement of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 is not caused by our sins but by the desecrating work of the little horn. In other words, the term "cleansing the sanctuary" in Daniel 8 does not refer to an investigation of our sins but to God's victory over antichrist on our behalf.
- c) The year-day principle is not explicitly identified as a scriptural rule for interpreting time prophecies.
- d) Under inspiration, the New Testament writers looked for the second coming of Christ in their day. They did not expect to wait 1900 years.
- e) Our acquittal in the judgment is based solely on the continued decision we make with respect to Jesus. To have accepted His death on our behalf is to have passed *already* from condemnation to salvation.
- 3) Church administration has apparently rejected Dr. Ford's willingness to cooperate in restoring church unity. We understand

you would not accept his assurance to teach only that which was approved at Glacier View. Instead the impossible demand has been laid upon him to repudiate his *conscientious* convictions. We find this particularly difficult to accept in view of the fact that no explicit scriptural proof has been offered to negate his views.

4) A "ten-point statement" has been used in condemning Dr. Ford's ministry both in the *Review* and in recent administrative actions. However, we question its legitimacy for this purpose:

a) It does not represent the consensus of Dr. Ford's brethren in that it was neither discussed nor voted by the *full* group at Glacier View.

b) It, in fact, contradicts the spirit and letter of the consensus statement at certain key points.

c) The authors of the document intended it to clarify communication at the conference and did not know it would be used to jeopardize Dr. Ford's ministry.

5) You assured the church in writing (*Review*, July 9) that the Glacier View conference would not be a trial of Dr. Ford. Evidence indicates however that it was primarily a trial and administrative action was begun there that will apparently deprive him of his credentials.

In view of the foregoing facts we must ask, Is it right to allow a minister to be defrocked who is in basic harmony with the theological consensus of his church? Is it right to condemn a man's theology by using a document (the "ten-point statement") that was not even discussed, let alone approved by the body of delegates appointed to judge his arguments? Is it right to ostracize a worker whose major biblical views, while criticized by some, have nevertheless been largely accepted by the body established to evaluate their merit? Is it right to ask anyone to give up his honest convictions (especially when he offers to table them while study continues and when no scriptural proof has shown them to be wrong)?

Because of our desire that justice be done and that reconciliation occur, we earnestly request that the following actions be taken:

1) The *Review* should frankly acknowl-

edge and explain Dr. Ford's contributions to Adventist sanctuary theology as accepted at Glacier View in the consensus statement, and rectify its prejudicial reporting of denominational issues.

2) A committee should be formed that includes a wide representation of Dr. Ford's fellow pastors and scholars to review administrative actions regarding his employment as a pastor in the denomination.

3) The General Conference should encourage church administrators to not regard with suspicion the workers and lay persons who share Scriptural concerns in common with Dr. Ford.

4) The administration should seek to be reconciled with those Adventists who feel that excessive concern for denominational tradition is eclipsing the rightful place of Christ and the Bible.

As you know, some congregations have already withdrawn from conference affiliation, others are splitting internally, and large numbers of denominational workers are fearful that their present connection with the organization is in jeopardy. We believe that decisive action on your part to redress what seems to be injustice can still avert a major fragmentation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. "The fruit of righteousness will be peace; The effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever" (Isa. 32:17).

## Bureaucratic Theology?

The beautiful thing about the General Conference meeting this May in Dallas was how "the people," God's church in holy convocation, came together and worked out a statement of fundamental beliefs. At the Glacier View Theological Consultation in August, administrators, including Elder Wilson, agreed with the theologians that the church's theology was a task to be shared by "the people."

I am, therefore, having great difficulty trying to understand the recent action of the President's Executive Advisory (PREXAD) in regard to Dr. Desmond Ford. The PREXAD action effectively undermined all the

good that the Glacier View meeting accomplished. According to the Ford letter, published in the recent special issue of *Ministry* magazine, he is reconciled to the newly approved statement of beliefs and he pledged to support them. To be perfectly candid, it seems that Dr. Ford is being "dealt with" for other than theological reasons. It would appear that the appeals to theology are serving the ends of church management.

This does not come as a complete surprise. I have observed that in recent years there has been a growing interest among church leaders in the principles and practices of professional management. Seminars and workshops have been conducted across the country, from Takoma Park, Maryland, to Riverside, California. This is to be applauded. Certainly, all would acknowledge the desirability of

**"Dr. Ford is being 'dealt with' for other than theological reasons. . . . the appeals to theology are serving the ends of church management."**

greater efficiency and sounder business practices' being brought into the work of the church. Like it or not, the church has become a big business.

However, along with this increased interest in "management by objective," I have noticed an intensified *management mentality*. An example is an increased awareness of the distinction between the various kinds of workers in the church structure.

Administrators are seen as the top power and influence brokers of our structure. Departmental directors are considered necessary to keep the machinery running, but vestiges of a bygone era, who will soon be phased out. The local pastor is the "foot soldier" lauded in speech and union papers. He is a necessary ally at constituency meetings, but is rarely taken seriously when it comes to deciding policy or theology. Thus, for the budding theology student, the pastoral ministry is viewed with disdain as only a jumping-off point to "greater" service.

The other professionals paid by the church (such as educators) are variously courted or

suspected, depending upon the issue of the moment. There is nearly a schizophrenic attitude toward the self-supporting worker.

But what of the layman? For at least a handful of church leaders around the world, a layman is to be managed, benevolently for his own good, of course, but certainly protected from the cares and vagaries of church government. This mentality is growing and intensifying.

"Souls and goals" cannot become the sole measure of success, or the less definable goals of love, freedom, community and charity will fade into the background. When success is measured quantitatively in terms of souls, goals and counties entered, a premium seems to be put on the absence of dissent.

But it is an acknowledged rule that freedom and exercise are necessary conditions for physical, mental and spiritual growth. To deny the saints the challenge of hard decision-making stunts their spiritual growth. We cannot simply do "theology by objective." Church members must be free to explore and dissent if the church is to be a community that flourishes physically, mentally and spiritually. We should provide ourselves with occasions within the life of the church when this kind of frank discussion can be encouraged.

Lorenzo H. Grant  
Division of Religion  
Southern Missionary College

## Journalistic Fairness?

Thinking back over the way in which the Ford matter has been dealt with since I wrote the preliminary report for SPECTRUM (Vol. 10, No. 4), my question is how well our Church handled a painful problem. May I speak without reference to the truth or error of any Ford proposition and without reference to whether or not he has been a difficult personality to work with?

I wonder to what extent the outcome would have been different had the *Review* (and other guardians of the traditions) really felt that Truth could afford to be fair. Did they fear God could not protect His own and

that Ford and his questions had to be publicly discredited in advance lest the select gathering at Glacier View be bewitched and succumb helplessly to the lure of Error?

Certainly, the uninformed reader of the *Review* might suppose that Ford's peers in Colorado had refuted his points and found him wanting, unaware that the larger group neither discussed nor voted the "Ten Points" which identified Ford's points of difference with Adventist tradition. Some of the scholars who were at Glacier View now express a rather pathetic naïveté, a tardy curiosity about the provenance of those "Ten Points" and how they were to be used. They say, in fact, they feel "used." Their protests to this effect, one assumes, are unlikely to be featured in the *Review* or the union papers.

**"The *Review* saw its role as polemical and apologetic and was willing to sacrifice its credibility as a reporter of news. . . ."**

Though discussions continued for some time after Glacier View between Ford, the General Conference officers and the Austrians, readers of the *Review* learned *while this was still going on* that it was all over, the brethren had refuted Ford, and Dr. and Mrs. Ford had already slunk away defeated into the night (4 September, p. 7). Reaffirmation is now announced as the equivalent of refutation. The widely heralded special issue of *Ministry*, if one notes the "stacking" of the contributors, will solve nothing. One can only hope the study committee apparently promised by President Wilson will some day be able to address the issues with the time and tranquility needed for such important scholarship.

Not a few suspect that the outcome of Glacier View was predetermined. However, does not the press campaign of the previous eight months indicate that the *Review* feared that it was not? So often through the centuries when church leaders have sensed a challenge, they proceed to operate as if the end justified the means. The *Review* saw its

role as polemical and apologetic and was willing to sacrifice its credibility as a reporter of news to the more important functions. Even if the *Review* position had represented 100 percent Truth, the means for shoring it up have been unworthy.

Walter C. Utt  
Department of History  
Pacific Union College

## The Bible Alone

At the Glacier View meeting, it was stated that Dr. Ford's views had to be "tested by the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White," and be compared with the historic interpretation of the church. The heavy mass of material of nearly 2,000 pages filling the bulging suitcases of committee members could have been replaced with one book — the Bible — as an answer for all their confusion.

One of the participants at Glacier View, Raymond Cottrell, stated in *SPECTRUM* (Vol. 10, No. 4) that "it was nothing less than a miracle that our spiritual forefathers found any consensus to unite them on important points of faith. . . that miracle was the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the person and ministry of Ellen White. . . her selective choice among the resulting alternatives determined which of the various interpretations the infant church should adopt. Whether or not this selection comported with strict exegesis of the Bible is irrelevant."

The only way that theologians like Cottrell, with decades of experience and the knowledge that there is no biblical basis for the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14, can hold to the Adventist position is to give greater authority to Ellen White's writings than they do to Scripture. To this layman, our position on the sanctuary should be based solely upon the Word of God — *sola Scriptura*.

As late as 1851, James White himself said in the *Review* and *Herald* that "there is no scriptural foundation for the teaching that the Investigative Judgment began in 1843 or 1844 or at any other time subsequent to the appear-

ing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The fact is, the traditional Adventist position is based on the views of Hiram Edson, O. R. L. Crosier and the writings of Uriah Smith. Ellen White's writings on the sanctuary are based on their work. Research shows what I consider to be indisputable evidence that passages of *Patriarchs and Prophets* copy and paraphrase Uriah Smith's volume, *The Sanctuary*. The following are particularly pertinent parallels: *PP*, p. 347 and *Sanctuary*, pp. 113, 114; *PP*, p. 352 and *Sanctuary*, pp. 202, 203. After Ellen White endorsed Uriah Smith's views, James White also changed his earlier stand.

Rather than rely on Ellen White's endorsement of others' ideas of the sanctuary, Adventists should ground their doctrine on the Bible and the Bible alone. Adventists should listen to Ellen White's own admonition in *Gospel Workers*, p. 127: "The only right way would be to sit down as Christians, and investigate the position presented, in the light of God's word, which will reveal truth and unmask error."

Eryl Cummings  
Farmington, New Mexico

## Theologians' Statement

At its second annual meeting in Dallas, Texas, on November 4-5, the Andrews Society for Religious Studies (comprised of the Bible teachers in North American colleges and universities) discussed Glacier View and its aftermath and authorized the following majority statement.

**I**n view of widely circulated reports concerning the attitude of Adventist scholars regarding the consensus statements of the Sanctuary Review Committee ("Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary" and "The Role of the Ellen G. White Writings in Doctrinal Matters"), we wish to make clear that we affirm these statements. We view them as being in significant continuity with traditional understanding, while incorporating new understandings, reflecting the contributions of all the documents prepared for the

Sanctuary Review Committee. We view these consensus statements as a stimulus to further study, and not as definitive formulations to end discussion. They were not intended to be used as a test of loyalty or orthodoxy.

We wish to express appreciation to the General Conference leadership for convening the Glacier View meeting of the Sanctuary Review Committee. Our love for the church and our concern for its unity impel us to do what we can to put to rest disruptive rumors about that meeting.

## Wilson Responds

*The following letter was addressed by President Neal Wilson to college and university presidents, health care corporation presidents, North American conference presidents, North American union presidents, General Conference department directors, division presidents and General Conference officers.*

**S**ince returning from the Sanctuary Review Committee at Glacier View, Colorado, held Aug. 10-15, 1980, I have received many telexed messages, telephone calls, telegrams, and letters. These have contained a wide variety of opinions, reactions, questions, inaccurate assumptions, judgment of leadership motives, criticisms, expressions of anger, and vicious verbal attacks, but also many words of encouragement and deep appreciation.

Many have sought an explanation of events that transpired following the Glacier View meetings. Almost every question that has been raised in the various types of communication which I have received, has been rather adequately answered, not only in a general way, but in many instances in a specific way, in the *Adventist Review* and the special 64-page issue of *Ministry*, which came off the press Sept. 22.

As many of you will remember, at the recent Annual Council I made a statement to the full assembly of leaders with respect to the way things stand at present, and I urged patience and discretion, as well as firmness.

As a part of my statement, I read a recent letter I had written to a young minister for whom I have personal concern and affection. Many of you attending the Annual Council requested a copy of this letter. I summarized some of my feelings in this way:

It may be difficult for you to put yourself in the place of some of us, and to fully understand or agree with decisions that have been made in good conscience by administration. You should know that some of these decisions have caused some of us considerable pain, and they were not arrived at hastily nor solely on the exchange of certain letters, nor with any vin-

**“A pastor’s search and study to find answers to questions that puzzle him is a legitimate effort and a pardonable activity; his teaching or preaching in fixed opposition to doctrines of the church is not.”**

dictive feelings, but rather, out of a sense of duty to the Lord’s work. It is essential to stress the point that in arriving at the counsel shared with the Australasian Division, General Conference leadership had taken a number of factors into consideration, of which the exchange of letters was but one.

Before I attempt to answer some of the questions raised in your letter, I wish to point out that a minister’s loss of credentials for theological reasons is a relatively rare occurrence in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Further, the last case previous to that of Dr. Ford in which the General Conference was involved, had to do with a pastor whose theological position was very opposite to that of Dr. Ford. Thus, ministers with differing theological orientation could also have cause for asking questions.

You ask if you can feel free to share the gospel as you see it. You did not state what your views were, but I would assume from your letter that they are somewhat similar to those expressed by Dr. Ford. I do not

think that Dr. Ford’s basic view of justification necessarily leads to divergent doctrine. It might be argued by some that we should restrict or discourage the preaching of the gospel, because Dr. Ford preached the gospel and came to what the church regards as unwarranted conclusions in areas related to it. This, however, is not our position. I am grateful that righteousness by faith was not the issue at Glacier View. It seems to me that the beautifully-worded analysis of the gospel entitled, “The Dynamics of Salvation,” which appeared in the July 31, 1980 *Adventist Review*, gives a marvelous basis for anyone wishing to preach the gospel and exalt Christ and the cross.

There are incipient plans for further study on some of the issues, particularly those that the Daniel Committee grappled with. We happen to believe that the Lord has told us the great benefit of studying Daniel and Revelation together. Also, the Biblical Research Institute is developing a study project on Ellen G. White, including the relationship of her writings to interpretation of the Scriptures. We will appoint the best qualified people available to study these topics. In addition, we would like to encourage a new era of intense personal study of the Bible by every member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I have every reason to believe that the administrators of the church will deal patiently and sympathetically with ministers who have questions about some Adventist doctrines and are searching for answers in the Scriptures. We do not believe it is Christian nor morally just to condemn or assign guilt by association. We do not want individuals to be held suspect simply because they are friends of or sympathetic with someone such as Dr. Ford, or because an individual might even have similar concerns.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church does hold very positive and specific doctrinal positions, and that the ministers of the church must be those who can conscientiously and enthusiastically teach those doctrines naturally follows. A pastor’s search and study to find answers to ques-

tions that puzzle him is a legitimate effort and a pardonable activity; his teaching or preaching in fixed opposition to doctrines of the church is not. Neither is it acceptable for ministers to remain silent or to be non-committal when it comes to doctrines or teachings of the church which clearly identify us as being distinctive from other Christian or evangelical groups.

If there are significant doctrines of this church which a minister cannot conscientiously support, and he "goes public" with this and challenges the church openly and indicates that the church is wrong and always has been wrong; when he creates a divisive situation and draws disciples after

himself and engages in schismatic activities, he should expect to be questioned in an effort to determine whether it is wise or possible for him to continue as a minister of the gospel in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The church is not embarking on a hunting expedition to find pastors who teach variant doctrines. The administrative actions that have followed Gacier View have not been separated from biblical study and evidence. I appeal to you to stay close to the Lord, to His Word, to His church, and its leaders. Don't permit a rift to develop in relation to any of these.

Neal C. Wilson